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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: DECLINE OF THE UNITED STATES

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage September 17 on the Taiwan Central Bank's decision to cut the reserve requirement for bank deposits in the wake of the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers; on local investors' panic amid reports about Lehman Brothers' bankruptcy and AIG's attempt to seek a loan from the United States government; on the ongoing rescue effort in typhoon-devastated central Taiwan; and on the revelation that as many as 69 brands of Chinese baby formula were found to be toxic. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" lashed out at U.S. President George W. Bush and his administration, calling Bush the "chief culprit who has caused the decline of the United States." End summary.

"[George W.] Bush is the Chief Culprit who has Caused the Decline of the United States"

Columnist Lin Po-wen wrote in his column in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 300,000] (9/17):

"... One can hardly find a worthy rival in U.S. history when it comes to the rapid decline of U.S. national strength under the governance of the Bush administration. The Chinese government spent US\$40 billion to host the Beijing Olympics, starting many large-scale building projects [in the country] and making the [Olympic Games] an impressive show, which has won the admiration of the world. Without a doubt, US\$40 billion is a huge figure. But to think better of it, the military expenses that the United States spends in Iraq every month is as high as US\$10 billion. In other words, with merely four months' worth of the [military] costs Washington spends on invading Iraq, the Chinese government was able to host a remarkable Olympic Games. The money spent on invading Iraq has cost the American taxpayers hundreds of billions (or maybe reaching a trillion) U.S. dollars. But what is more horrifying is that, during an era when other countries are striving to move forward, the United States instead is wasting humongous resources on the war in Iraq. [As a result,] budgets for many federal agencies (particularly those research-oriented ones) were cut significantly; many things that should have been done remained undone, and many public construction projects were either canceled or suspended. The United States is like a patient that is frail and failing before his time.

"Factors contributing to the decline of the U.S. national strength are too numerous to be cited individually, a majority of which are artificial factors. ... Among such leaders, the worst one and the one who should be held notably responsible is Bush. Quite a few political commentators have long since judged that Bush is the number one politician who has gone 'brain dead.' What is most ironic is that Bush is the first president in U.S. history who has an MBA degree (from Harvard Business School). All policy decisions regarding of the outbreak of the financial meltdown this time and the sub-prime mortgage crisis months earlier were all made by the heads of the Treasury Department and the Office Thrift Supervision. Bush, who 'does not look like a head of a state,' can do nothing but stand aside [in terms of these crises], and there is no room for him

to express his views.

"... [D]uring the eight years of Bush's governance, the Department of Justice has degenerated into a filthy place where people accept bribes and confer official positions for money. These servile followers of Bush and his administration do whatever pleases them and do everything they can to ruin the federal prosecutors' system. Under the command of those neo-conservatives at the White House and the Pentagon, these people treat international laws and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights as wastepaper, secretly set up gloomy prison cells at Guantanamo Bay, and put thousands of innocent Muslims behind bars (including some Uyghur people from Xinjiang) without trial ... All the ideals and dignity advocated in the U.S. Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights and the U.S. Constitution have become disposable rubbish during the Bush era, and the United States is akin to a country without a soul. It would be very difficult for it not to be in decline! ..."

YOUNG